The above process was repeated twice. The final product thus obtained was then washed with 25 ml of acetone and then dried to obtain 40-45 g of the desired isoleuco acid of formula (4).

Isosulfan Blue of the Formula (5)

15 g (0.027 mol) of isoleuco acid of the formula (4) and 225 mL of Methanol were charged into a 1 L round bottomed flask and the suspension was stirred. To the stirred suspension, 15.91 g (0.068 mol, 2.5 eq.) of silver oxide was added in one portion at room temperature and stirred at room temperature for 12-14 hours. The reaction mixture turned blue in color as the oxidation to the desired product progressed. The HPLC results indicated the absence of starting material. The blue colored reaction mixture was filtered through a buchner funnel and the solid silver oxide collected was taken into the reaction flask and the filtrate was kept aside. 225 ml of methanol was added to the silver oxide taken in the reaction flask and stirred at 20-25° C. for 30 minutes and filtered through the buchner funnel. This silver oxide washing procedure with methanol was carried out twice more.

The combined filtrates along with the initial filtrate were then filtered through a bed of silica gel/celite (2 inch silica gel/1 inch of celite) and finally the bed was washed with 50 mL of methanol.

The filtrate was then subjected to a filtration through an acidic zeolite bed of 2 inch height (pH of the zeolite bed was adjusted to acidic pH by using 0.1N hydrochloric acid aqueous solution) followed by filtration through a 0.2 micron filtration unit.

Isopropyl ether was added three times the volume of the filtrate and the isosulfan blue acid was precipitated as a solid at about 10 gram (68.8%) yield.

In order to prepare the Isosulfan blue sodium salt of the formula (5), 10.0 g of the solid obtained above was dissolved in 30 mL deionized water. Saturated sodium bicarbonate solution was added drop wise to adjust the pH to 8.0. To this 300 mL of acetone was added and stirred at 20-25° C. for 30 minutes. The crystallized product was then filtered through a buchner funnel and the solid thus obtained was dried at 40° C. under vacuum to obtain the isosulfan blue sodium salt of formula (5).

While the preferred embodiments have been described and illustrated it will be understood that changes in details and obvious undisclosed variations might be made without departing from the spirit and principle of the invention and therefore the scope of the invention is not to be construed as limited to the preferred embodiment.

The invention claimed is:

1. A compound N-[4-[[4-(diethyl amino)phenyl](2,5-disulfophenyl)methylene]-2,5-cyclohexadien-1-ylidene]-N-ethylethanaminium, sodium salt having a purity of at least 99.0% by HPLC.

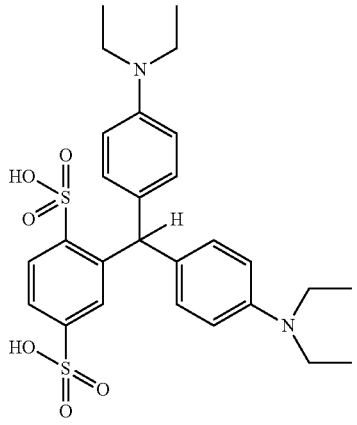
2. The compound according to claim **1** having a purity between 99.0% and 99.5% by HPLC.

3. The compound according to claim **1** having less than 20 ppm silver.

4. The compound according to claim **3** having a purity greater than 99.5% by HPLC.

5. The compound according to claim **1** prepared by a process comprising combining a suspension of isoleuco acid of the formula

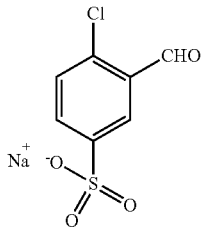
(4)



in a polar solvent with silver oxide, recovering isosulfan blue acid, and treating the isosulfan blue acid with a sodium solution.

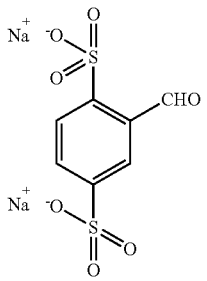
6. The compound according to claim **5** wherein the process comprises sulfonation of 2-chlorobenzaldehyde to obtain 2-chlorobenzaldehyde-5-sulfonic acid sodium salt of the formula

(2)



followed by nucleophilic displacement of the chloride in 2-chlorobenzaldehyde-5-sulfonic acid sodium salt with an alkali metal sulfite and bisulfate to obtain benzaldehyde-2,5-disulfonic acid, disodium salt of the formula

(3)



and condensing the benzaldehyde-2,5-disulfonic acid, disodium salt of the formula (3) with N, N-diethylaniline using urea and glacial acetic acid to provide isoleuco acid of the formula (4).

7. The compound according to claim **6** wherein the process of preparing 2-chlorobenzaldehyde-5-sulfonic acid, sodium salt of formula (2) comprises reacting 2-chlorobenzaldehyde with sulfuric acid.

8. The compound according to claim **5** wherein the polar solvent is methanol.